

UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

Section 14: God's Supremacy and Sovereignty

Assigned Reading:
A. W. Pink – The Attributes of God
The Supremacy of God
The Sovereignty of God

Introduction:

We have spent several weeks speaking of the “infinitude” of God. We’ve spoken of God’s infinitude in relation to Time (God’s Eternality), in relation to Location (God’s Omnipresence), in relation to Ability (God’s Omnipotence), and in relation to Knowledge (God’s Omniscience). Last week we discussed attributes describing God’s being – namely, Spirituality and Invisibility. There is hardly a more natural segue to now speak of God’s Supremacy. He is altogether different from everything else! God is arrayed in glory and is exalted above all. As the Psalmist (**Ps 97:9**) says, “For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.” In **Isaiah 57:15** we read, “For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, “I dwell on a high and holy place, And *also* with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.” This morning, let’s rightly think of our relation to Him who is “high and exalted.” The outworking of God’s Supremacy is His Sovereignty; we’ll spend some time discussing this as well. You will be reminded of the parallels between these attributes and God’s Omnipotence. Some theologians see supremacy and sovereignty as merely descriptions of God’s Omnipotence. While I would agree that these are out workings of God’s Omnipotence, they can be understood separately in reference to God’s decrees, freedom, and will. We’ll spend time on these in coming weeks. Sovereignty will be reopened when we discuss many of God’s actions (Creation, Providence, Salvation, etc) in coming months...

Q1: *What do we mean by God’s Supremacy and Sovereignty?*

Q2: *What are the implications of a “low view of God?”*

Q3: *What is the proper relationship between God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Responsibility?*

Outline:

I. Defining Terms...

A. Supremacy

1. Martin Luther in a letter to Erasmus said, “Your thoughts of God are too human.”
2. **Pink** points out that “the most dishonoring and degrading conceptions of the rule and reign of the Almighty are now held almost everywhere. To countless thousands, even among those professing to be Christians, the God of the Scriptures is quite unknown.”
3. Countless multitudes imagine God as themselves [Ps 50:21]... creating God in the image of lesser things (Rom 1). There has been a loss of the awe of God’s Greatness!
4. By Supremacy we speak of God’s Position/Relation in regards to everything else.
5. In relation to everything else, God exists in an entirely different way (uncreated) and His existence supersedes all other existence. There no-thing that He can be likened to [see Is 40:18,25, 46:5], and in relation to Him, all things pale in comparison. He is perfectly Supreme in all things!

6. **Pink**, “A “god” whose will is restricted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated, possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits naught but contempt.”

B. *Sovereignty*

1. As already stated above, God’s sovereignty is the outworking of His Supremacy!
2. **Pink**, “Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth. Subject to none, influence by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him.”
3. **Isaiah 46:10** Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';
4. **Daniel 4:35** "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'
5. **Psalms 135:6** Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.
6. **Ryrie**, “God is the chief Being in the universe and is supreme in power in the universe.”

II. The Witness of the Scriptures...

A. *Supremacy...*

1. **Read Psalm 2... * v4** “*He who sits in the heavens laughs...*”
2. **David declares in 1 Chronicles 29:11-12** "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. ¹² "Both riches and honor *come* from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.
3. **Jehosaphat exclaims in 2 Chronicles 20:6** "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You.
4. **Psalm 115:1-3** Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth. ² Why should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?" ³ But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

B. *Sovereignty...*

1. **Job answers the Lord in Job 42:2** "I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.
2. **Job 12:13-16** "With Him are wisdom and might; To Him belong counsel and understanding. ¹⁴ "Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt; He imprisons a man, and there can be no release. ¹⁵ "Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; And He sends them out, and they inundate the earth. ¹⁶ "With Him are strength and sound wisdom, The misled and the misleader belong to Him.
3. **Ephesians 1:11** also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

4. **God is Sovereign over inanimate objects...**
 - a. **Ex 7, 14** – The Nile & The Red Sea
 - b. **Num 16** – the Ground
 - c. **Josh 10, Is 38:8** – The Sun

5. **God is Sovereign over animals...**
 - a. **Ex 8-10** – frogs, gnats, flies, disease, hail, locusts
 - b. **I Kings 17** – Ravens
 - c. **Dan 6** – Lions
 - d. **I Kings 13** – Donkey and Lion
 - e. **Num 22:22ff** – A Donkey Talks...

6. **God is Sovereign over men...**
 - a. **Ex 11-12** – Plague of the Death of the 1st Born
 - b. **Our plans are “subject to change”** – **Ja 4:13-15** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." ¹⁴ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."
 - c. **Luke 12:13-21 The Parable of the Rich Fool...**
 - d. **Proverbs 21:1** The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.
 - e. **Proverbs 16:9** The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.
 - f. **ESV: Prov 21:30** No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.

7. **God is Sovereign over the angels...**
 - a. **God's permission to Satan – Job 1-2**
 - b. **Book of Revelation...** *see **Rev 7:1-3** – angelic actions according to God's plan
 - c. **Satan is conquered w/o any problem whatsoever... 4 verses given to his demise...** ***Revelation 20:7-10** When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

III. Discussing God's Supremacy and Sovereignty...

A. *The Practical Importance*

1. **Pink**, "Here then is a sure resting-place for the heart. Our lives are neither the product of blind fate nor the result of capricious chance, but every detail of them was ordained from all eternity, and is now ordered by the living and reigning God.
2. **Ps 139** – David found great comfort and reassurance in God's knowing all his ways (even his inmost being created by God in his mother's womb) and having written every day of his life before there was even one of them. In the face of danger, David takes great solace in God's Supremacy and Sovereignty! GREAT COMFORT!

3. **Jer 1** – Jeremiah is encouraged to preach the truth unapologetically for God had specially equipped him for this task. This provided Jeremiah with steadfastness of resolve when his prophetic ministry was detested by those around him, and he suffered for it. (**Jer 20**)
4. **Great Quote from Spurgeon**, “There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God’s Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all... On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creature then gnash their teeth. And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is the God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust.”

B. The Relationship between Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

1. **God effectually carries out His will through responsible human agency...**
2. **Good Example is that of Jonah:**
 - a. Jonah is the epitome of rebellious attitude and behavior toward the Lord...
 - b. Everything else in the story demonstrates right response to God’s Sovereignty!
 - (1) The wind and waves obeys God
 - (2) The ship’s captain and the Ninevite King acknowledge that God cannot be forced by the will of man...
 - (3) The ship’s crew acknowledges that God acts as He pleases
 - (4) The sailors throw Jonah overboard as the Lord desires
 - (5) The fish obeys the Lord
 - (6) The Ninevites repent – king, people, animals... ☺
 - (7) The plant grows as the Lord directs
 - (8) The worm eats the plant as the Lord directs
 - (9) A scorching east wind blasts Jonah by the Lord’s command
 - c. We see the theme of sovereign grace triumphing over human defiance...
 - (1) All the characters respond to God’s gracious compassion, except Jonah!
 - (2) The account ends with Jonah still unresolved in his hatred for the Ninevites...
 - (3) But as defiant as Jonah is, it results in the furtherance of God’s Intention!
 - Not only do the Ninevites hear God’s message and repent, but another group does as well – the sailors! **Jonah 1:14-16** Then they called on the LORD and said, "We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased." ¹⁵ So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. ¹⁶ Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

3. **Pink offers an interesting answer...** “We live in a day when even the most ‘orthodox’ seem afraid to admit the proper Godhood of God. They say that to press the sovereignty of God excludes human responsibility; whereas human responsibility is based upon Divine sovereignty, and is the product of it... Many have most foolishly said that it is quite impossible to show where Divine sovereignty ends and creature accountability begins. Here is where the creature responsibility begins: in the sovereign ordination of the Creator. As to His sovereignty, there is not and never will be any “end” to it!”
4. *By God’s sovereignty, man was given responsibility... having disobeyed the Lord’s commands, man was alienated from Him w/o means of restoring the relationship on his own. By God’s sovereignty, Jesus Christ died upon the cross, receiving the just penalty that the elect of God deserved. By Jesus’ vicarious propitiation, we now have His standing before God and His life as ours! By God’s sovereignty, we as Christians have been placed in “unconditional” relationship with God!*
5. **Romans 9:18** So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
6. **Calvin** described the Sovereignty of God as “a secret so much excelling the insight of the human mind that I am not ashamed to confess ignorance. Far be it from any of the faithful to be ashamed of ignorance of what the Lord withdraws into the glory of his inaccessible light.” (see **Rom 11:33**)